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HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS: HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATIONS AND REPORTS OF SPECIAL RAPPORTEURS AND REPRESENTATIVES

Letter dated 9 May 1995 from the Permanent Representative of Croatia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to submit herewith the second appeal to the United Nations by the Association of Croats from north-western Bosnia (see annex).

I would kindly request your assistance in distributing the present letter and its annex as a document of the fiftieth session of the General Assembly under item 114 (c) of the preliminary list.

(Signed) Mario NOBILO
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

* A/50/50.

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ANNEX

Second appeal of the Association of Croats from north-western Bosnia to the United Nations

In mid-January of this year, we initiated the "Action for Banja Luka". In this Action, we appealed to our home public to stop further genocide against the non-Serbian population, both individuals and groups, in Banja Luka.

By the end of February 1995, we appealed to the United Nations and the international community.

Over the past four years, the area of Banja Luka has seen:

- Four Catholic priests and more than 400 Catholic civilians murdered in their homes;

- Thirty-seven churches destroyed or burned down;

- Thousands of Croats, Muslims, Romanies, Ukrainians and others forcefully moved to the front-lines;

- Many houses destroyed, plundered or confiscated;

- The non-Serbian population deprived of all civil rights.

All representatives of the United Nations and international and domestic humanitarian and human rights organizations have declared that the situation in Banja Luka deserves international attention and concern.

In the wake of recent developments in the Republic of Croatia, the position of Catholic Croats in Banja Luka has deteriorated dramatically.

On 6-7 May 1995, the Franciscan Monastery and Church of Petričevac in Banja Luka was completely destroyed by planted explosives. On this occasion, Father Alojzije Atlija, the oldest Franciscan in the Monastery, who was sick and bedridden, was killed. The nine Catholic nuns who remained in their cloisters in Bosanski Aleksandrovac and Topola were expelled. The local media is continuing to spread a campaign of hatred.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has registered that 4,654 Serbs have crossed from western Slavonia in the Republic of Croatia to the area of Banja Luka. At the same time, non-Serbs in Banja Luka are reported to be exposed to threats, which are likely to turn into large-scale violence against them.

In the past four years the local Serbian authorities have not intervened in a single case of violence against the non-Serbian population in order to identify the perpetrators of crimes or to protect people and their property.

The only international organizations engaged in the area of Banja Luka on a permanent basis are the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and ICRC. The Special Rapporteur appointed by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights to investigate the situation of human rights in the territory of the former Yugoslavia, Mr. Tadeusz Mazowiecki, has hitherto not managed to visit the area of Banja Luka. Not even Mr. Yashushi Akashi, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations in this region, has been allowed to enter the area.

Today, as we are celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the victory over fascism, we are living in an absolute reign of terror simply because of our religion and nationality. We are cut off from the world and are left without any chance of someone coming to our aid while we are being terrorized; at a time when our children and the elderly are being killed and when our priests and nuns as well as other non-Serbs are being forced to flee. We are unable to protect our homes and our churches. We are being deported to prison camps. We are being driven from our homes. We have been deprived of all civil rights and have no protection from the violence. The only form of communication we receive is hatred, threats, persecution, torture and murder. All this is taking place in an area that has never been affected by war operations.

We accept the idea of having people from another State settle in the Banja Luka area if this will contribute to achieving peace and the protection of human rights. We cannot, however, accept and strongly object to the fact that the United Nations is bringing people of one nationality from another State to the Banja Luka area, who are given every right of residence, while at the same time the local authorities are forcing us to abandon our homes. We welcome the care that the United Nations, foreign journalists and other international representatives have shown to the civilian population in western Slavonia, but we cannot accept the fact that this situation is being used to cover up the killing, destruction, persecution, plunder and campaign of hatred that is being practised against us.

Today, on the fiftieth anniversary of the victory over fascism, we appeal to all Jews who are commemorating their dead, to the United Nations, which is supposed to cherish its Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to all Christians who believe in god, and to all people who believe in the power and efficiency of good, to ensure that United Nations representatives are immediately allowed to enter Banja Luka in order to guarantee a permanent respect for human rights of all people in the region, Serbs, Bosniacs, Croats and others alike.

Let foreign journalists enter the region of Banja Luka to report on the situation as they do in western Slavonia. Let representatives of the international diplomatic core and humanitarian organizations go to Banja Luka on a fact-finding mission and thus help the people there.

While we are being exposed to extreme suffering, the world around us refuses to acknowledge us, to see or hear us. Europe and the world at large are still refusing to recognize our very existence. We appeal to all our fellow suffers, Jews, Romanies, the sick, believers and all those who perished in the Nazi and Stalinist concentration camps. The final victory has yet to be

achieved. We are still alive, but are also dying. We are a speckle of human strength, plight, weakness and shame.

So much energy is being used to extinguish our life-force, to impose against us a culture of death. But we are going to keep our life-force burning as long as we can and therefore carry the torch of survival, tolerance, mutual aid and human dignity. In today's Europe, Banja Luka is the place that will show whether or not only a significant military victory was won 50 years ago or whether Europe chose finally to end the era of totalitarian tyranny.

Mr. Boutros-Ghali and others in the United Nations, Mr. Clinton and other Heads of State, Mr. Sommaruga and heads of other humanitarian organizations:

Is there still any hope for us? Do we have any human value and rights as human beings? Will you do anything for us? We plead for your help!